

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN

Report of the Proceedings of the 66th Annual Conference

held at:

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 27th, 28th and 29th March, 1970.

Attendances at Conference

Delegates present Branches represented

<u>Friday</u>	Morning	27	12
	Afternoon	(Hackney not represented)			15
<u>Saturday</u>		28	16
<u>Sunday</u>	(at 3 p.m.)	W. London not represented			15

Financial Statement

<u>Collections:</u>	Friday	£17. 1. 2	
	Saturday	3. 1. 8	
	Sunday	11.17. 0	
	Friday evening meetings	15. 1. 0	
<u>Lit. Sales:</u>	Conference general	7. 1.11	
	Friday evening meeting	3. 1. 6	
	Saturday Social	22. 0. 0	£79. 4. 3
<u>Expenditure:</u>	Hall hire	£57.15. 0	
	Fares	2. 0. 0	
	Caretaker	5. 0. 0	64.15. 0
			£14. 9. 3

Comrade E. Guy was elected as Chairman and Comrade H. Young as Vice Chairman.

Standing Orders Committee acted as Tellers. Proceedings commenced at 11.40 a.m.

Before proceeding with the Agenda Cde. Phillips, Gen. Secretary, announced that it was his pleasant duty to welcome to the Conference Comrade Kurz, a delegate from our comrades in Vienna, who took a place on the platform.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Westminster

"Procedure for nominating E.C. sub-Committees"

Cde. Goodman. A better procedure should be found for nominating sub-Committees. This year her Branch nominated 43 members of whom only 9 were new nominees. Our present method was cumbersome, involving a considerable amount of correspondence for Branch secretaries. It would be a better idea if in the case of members who are prepared to stand again the E.C. could take them as read. Gen. Secretary. At the moment we are governed by Party rule which says that "all names shall be called for". An invitation, however, is sent to all sub-Committees asking them if they are willing to stand again, and this year, in the case of the Scrutiny of Forms "A" Committee, they indicated they were willing to stand again and were re-appointed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Haringey

"Why the Party's name should be changed to 'The World Socialist Party of Great Britain'."

Cde. Buick, Haringey. The basic reason for this change of name is that it makes it quite clear that we are not just a national Party concerned only with national politics but with the establishment of a new world society. The disadvantages, e.g. the reputation of the Party as the S.P.C.B. built up over 50 years and the danger that if we dropped our present name it might be taken up by someone else, would be outweighed by the additional stress laid on the fact that our object is the establishment of a new world society.

Delegates were not in favour of this change of name for various reasons - The World Socialist Party of Great Britain is a contradiction in terms; socialism in any case means a world-wide system of society, that it is impossible in a name, anyway, to prevent confusion with other political Parties; that we are not yet a world-wide Party at all: we are a Party here in Great Britain, we should have difficulty in selling our pamphlets, and that when a political Party changes its name it is often a sign that they are going down hill.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Manchester

"Re-organisation of Party Administration"

Cde. Atkinson, Manchester. We are not critical of the existing administration but would like delegates to consider certain improvements which could be discussed more fully at the next Delegate Meeting or Conference. Party organisation at the moment is only geared to cope with approximately 700 members and will be inadequate to deal with a larger number as the Party grows. The formation of the E.C. is centred in London. Provincial and Central Branch members, when filling in ballot forms, do not know whom they are voting for. We should consider area representation. The E.C. might meet once a fortnight at certain points in different areas. Also the Party at the moment has too many committees - four Committees, Propaganda, Publicity, Publications and Finance, should be sufficient. They should be larger and carry out the functions of the present numerous small committees. We should examine the possibility of having a Central Branch Secretary at Head Office and area Central Branch committees to deal with the members in a particular area. There should be an area committee in the north west capable of vetting leaflets which need to be got out quickly. There should also be sufficient E.C. Reports sent to Branch secretaries for individual members. Mid. Herts. supported this last suggestion, indicating their willingness to bear any extra cost.

Cde. Phillips, Gen. Secretary. We are fully aware of the present inadequacies in Party administration but we are hoping to make some improvements in the coming year. Regarding individual copies of E.C. Reports, Branches should think of the extra cost to the Party and the added work and cost to Branch secretaries. Cde. Goodman, Westminster. It is the duty of members belonging to Branches to attend those Branches and the reading of E.C. Reports takes very little time. Cde. Baldwin, E.C. member.

Regarding the publication of Party literature at local level, there was a need for Party control even though this might mean a time lag. If statements were published by Branches which had the name of the Party at the top and underneath the name of the Branch, the Branch to pay the cost, this might be a way out. Conference should look into the implications of Rule 17. Cde. May, Westminster. Certain difficulties would arise if the E.C. attempted to meet in different places in the Provinces - finding a place to stay, coping with the papers and records that would have to go with them. I sympathise with members in the Provinces and we should make an effort to see what can be done to give them a better knowledge of people they might want to put on the E.C. The E.C. should set up area committees for vetting material for publication.

Floor Resolution: May & J. Weidberg (Westminster):

"This Conference recommends the E.C. to consider the setting up of Area Committees to vet material for publication and that Branches be asked to submit their views and suggestions on the working of such Committees".

Amendment: Leslie (Edinburgh) Simkin (S.W. London):

"In place of 'Area Committees' insert 'Branch Committees be set up'".

Considerable discussion took place regarding the advisability of allowing Branches to be responsible for their own publications: several delegates being of the view that vetting by the E.C. was superfluous in an organisation where all are socialists. Other delegates thought that vetting by the E.C. of all Party literature is a well-founded and democratic procedure which has not led to any serious delays in the past. The publication of a leaflet on topical strikes, etc. is not always a simple matter, the exact facts as to the issues at stake not being always available. Considerable experience is required which Branches, particularly new ones, do not always have. Cde. May. There should be two Area Committees - one dealing with Edinburgh and Glasgow and one for Manchester and Liverpool, with possibly two members from Edinburgh and two from Glasgow, who would be in a position to meet within 24 hours to vet material for publication so that in the event of a strike something could be got out quickly. But in most cases where there are industrial disputes the Party has invariably steered clear of putting out a statement largely because we do not always have all the information and as a political organisation we do not necessarily tie ourselves up with any particular Trade Union dispute. Nevertheless we cannot continue to have every piece of literature coming to the E.C. for guidance and vetting. The time is coming when we shall have to give more autonomy.

Amendment	Lost 12 - 21
Resolution Carried	26 - 3

Floor Resolution Atkinson (Manchester) Aspinall (Liverpool):

"This Conference recommends the E.C. to arrange for all Branch Secretaries to receive copies of E.C. Reports, Conference Agendas and relevant literature for distribution to Branch members".

There was little further discussion here, the matter having already been touched on. The points made for this procedure were that Minutes are boring for visitors to the Branch, they take up a lot of Branch time which could be better spent in general discussion. On the other hand, it was thought that if Minutes are read regularly and not allowed to accumulate they do not take very long, it would add very considerably to the work of Branch secretaries, particularly in large Branches. Also that members receiving copies by post tend not to attend their Branch and may not even bother to read them. In reply to a question - "Do E.C. Minutes have to be read to the Branch according to Branch Standing Orders?", the Gen. Secretary replied "Yes: they come under the Item 'Reports'".

Resolution Lost 7 - 21

FINANCE

Cde. Lawrence, Camden. It would appear from the first full year that dues were increased only 50 per cent, of members paid dues in spite of repeated appeals for money. How do Branches measure up in their liability to the Party? The E.C.

should look into this. Cde. R. Guy, Auditor. It appears that Branches do not purchase the due stamps they should according to their Branch membership. Members are allowed to fall into arrears, but to go into these figures more closely would be a fantastic task. Cde. K. Knight, Mid. Herts. We should look at our accounts more closely and try to make more accurate statements as to what we are likely to spend in the future.

The Gen. Secretary read the following fraternal greetings from our Companion Parties:-

World Socialist Party of Ireland
World Society of the United States, Boston.
Socialist Party of New Zealand
Socialist Party of New Zealand, Wellington
Comrade R. Frank, Vienna, Austria.

Delegates agreed that the Gen. Secretary should send our fraternal greetings in reply to all these comrades.

Comrade Kurz here addressed the delegates, giving a few details of their Party and of conditions in Austria: "I am very glad to meet so many socialists and to learn that we are making a break-through in the elections. It is a great thing to be mentioned in the Press and on Television. In Austria we would be very happy to have such success. Our Party does not have such a long tradition as yours and conditions are very different. We have had one fascist government after another and people here are afraid of being mixed up in politics. For many years we had to be content with a duplicated paper, and even now we can only publish our printed paper four times a year because there is a lot of work to be done and many of our members are inactive. Our greatest achievement over the years was getting in touch with Comrade Frank and now we know we are not alone in our struggle for socialism. We have 40 members in Vienna of whom only 12 to 15 are active members. We have very few members in the countryside. Religion is a greater factor against our propaganda in the countryside than in the towns.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Manchester "The E.C.'s handling of E.C. Recommendations"

Cde. Crump, Manchester. "A resolution was carried 25-4 at Annual Conference 1969 - "This Conference calls on the E.C. to set up a Committee to report to the 1969 Delegate Meeting with details of costs and probable advantages of employing a member full-time at Head Office". The E.C. consider we cannot afford this at the moment but apart from that they appear to have shelved the matter. The recommendation of this resolution should be carried out and a committee should be set up.

Comrade Curtis, part time H.O. Assistant, gave full details of the very considerable amount of work which he carries out at Head Office.

The Gen. Secretary explained that the E.C. had considered the resolution of Conference to set up a Committee and had sent out a call to all Branches via E.C. Reports for nominations - to reply within one month. No Branch replied in that time. However, Manchester Branch did reply on the 25th August 1969 and three names were suggested by 24th September: and this late date made it impossible to report to the Delegate Meeting. This is still an open matter which can go forward for discussion.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Westminster "The organisational status of Party Groups"

Cde. K. Knight, Mid. Herts. asked why Brighton Group had not yet become a Branch taking their full responsibility in Party organisation. Comrade Holford, Brighton, replied for the Group that they did not have sufficient members who could attend a Branch regularly. Most of their members, though very active, were very scattered. The Gen. Secretary drew delegates' attention to E.C. Report of 27th January 1970 which gave Branches full information on this matter.

RESOLUTION

Camden

"No donation to the Party, whether in cash or kind, should be accepted for any specific purpose unless such purposes have already been agreed to by the Party or are eventually agreed to: in every instance under Party control".

Amendments:

Haringey, Manchester, Ealing: "Delete 'or are eventually agreed to'".
Mid.Herts.

Cde. Devereux, Camden. The words 'under Party control' were put in to ensure that any gifts of money made over to the Party should be under the direct control of the Party and not of some individual, even if this means refusing donations with strings attached: e.g. with this resolution the Party could (1) refuse money if strings were attached (2) accept it because it is in line with Party activity and (3) it gives the Party an opportunity to modify any existing ruling in the light of the conditions which come up at the time of the gift in question. We want to exclude an individual saying "I will give you this money if you will do what I want". This is normally what does happen in the Party but in view of things which have happened recently the Party's attitude should be properly recorded so there would be no question of the matter being debated all over again. Cde. D'Arcy, E.C. member. (for the resolution). While we want Conference to tell the E.C. that we cannot accept certain proposals in cash or kind unless the Party has agreed to them, if money was donated, say for the installation of central heating at Head Office or some badly needed new furniture, the E.C. should be able to discuss whether there was some merit in these proposals. Edinburgh. Each gift should be judged on its merits - favoured the Amendment. Westminster. supported the resolution. Haringey. The resolution does not go far enough.

Amendment Lost 16 - 28

Resolution " 18 - 27

Comrade Goodman, Overseas Contacts Secretary, mentioned that our Jamaican comrades have now acquired a Gestetner duplicating machine for which they have been saving up for some time. They have also acquired a Post Office Box Number.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Manchester:

"The raising of dues"

Manchester wished the dues to be raised to 2/- - this would be more in line with the work the Party has to do. Members should put sufficient money into the kitty to carry out the propaganda work that we envisage.

Nothing resolved

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Westminster

"Division of dues between Branches and Head Office when decimilation becomes operative".

There was little discussion on this. It was pointed out that under decimilation half could still conveniently go to Head Office and half to Branches.

Cde. K. Knight, Mid.Herts. presented delegates with a roneoed analysis of the Party's finances for 1962 to 1969 and an estimate for 1970. He drew attention to the fact that we have received something like £12,000 in legacies over the past six years but apart from some improvements to Head Office there is little to show for it except a lot of literature piling up at H.O. Cde. R. Guy, Auditor. All our resources are required to support the deficit on the "Socialist Standard" and at the end of this financial year we shall be in financial difficulties unless a further legacy is forthcoming. The "S.S." should be our absolute priority and although it is nice to have more pamphlets and leaflets they may possibly in the future endanger the publication of the "S.S.". Unless our membership grows dramatically, considering rising printing costs etc, if you persist in selling the "S.S." at the lowest possible price, the very existence of the "S.S." will be doubtful very shortly. You should come to terms with the world you live in. Even if you doubled the price to 2/- it would still be competitive compared with other literature. I suggest that certain articles in the

"S.S" could be serialised and inserted monthly as a supplement: these could then be detached by the reader to collate into a pamphlet, and thus we could sell at one and the same time the "Socialist Standard" at a more practicable price and cheap, detachable pamphlets on topical issues.

In reply to a question as to what is happening regarding the suggestion at last Conference that the Party should do its own printing at Head Office, and which did not appear to have been pursued, Cde. K. Knight stated that the other members of the Printing Committee had agreed that he should try and take the matter further. Three questions arise - (1) How are we going to get the money? A specific fund was a possibility. (2) How much support will be offered by members? (3) Consideration by the E.C. of the cost of equipment. Cde. Knight has a friend in this field who has promised to advise the Party on the 'best buy' and to help train anyone who needs training. He urged Branches to send in their views on the matter and the Chairman pointed out that the E.C. is now awaiting some further details from Comrade Knight.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE

Rule 2. Mid.Herts. "Delete penultimate sentence and insert 'The Branch Secretary shall notify any member becoming 13 and 26 weeks in arrears and, if after 28 days of the sending of the second notice no satisfactory explanation is received the member may be lapsed by the Branch, subject to E.C. ratification, and shall not be allowed to join any other Branch whilst these arrears remain'".

LOST 17 - 26

Rule 3. Westminster. "Insert before the last sentence 'Members of a Branch ceasing to exist shall be automatically transferred to Central Branch unless they request otherwise'". CARRIED 31 - 14

Rule 12. Mid.Herts. "Delete final sentence and insert 'If the membership of the E.C. falls to under twelve a by-election be held within the next month to restore a full membership'".

Amendt. Westminster. "Delete 'vacancies occurring....' to the end of Rule and substitute 'Vacancies on the E.C. shall be filled only by seeking further nominations and subsequent ballot. Vacancies occurring after 1st October shall not be filled'".

Amendt. Camden. "Delete all after the word 'Branches' in line 3, and insert 'Vacancies occurring on the E.C. shall be filled by a call for nominations and a fresh ballot'".

Both Mid.Herts. and Westminster considered the present method of nominations to the E.C. of taking the next highest on the list of nominees as undemocratic. At the same time there was a need to avoid continuous by-elections which cost both time and money. Cde. Lawrence, for Camden, stated that they preferred Westminster's amendment to their own and asked that their amendment should be withdrawn if Westminster's amendment was carried.

Mid.Herts. Amendment Lost 7 - 37

Westminster " Carried 27 - 18

Rule 13 Mid.Herts. "The second sentence of Rule 13 be amended to read 'Half the membership shall be a quorum'".

(This amendment fell because the Mid.Herts. amendment to Rule 12 was lost).

Rule 15. Mid.Herts. "That to the first sentence of Rule 15 be added 'detailing income and expenditures for the period under review, and a budget showing possible sources of income to meet anticipated expenditures'".

Lost 14 - 20

Rule 16. Westminster. "Delete this rule and re-number subsequent rules".

Lost 9 - 34

PUBLICITY

RESOLUTION: Lewisham. "That the Party's name shall appear in full in all advertising matter in the name of the Party".

Amendt. Haringey. "Insert after 'Party's name' in line 1, 'i.e. The Socialist Party of Great Britain'".

Amendt. Manchester. "Delete 'in full'".

Manchester amendment fell. Haringey amendment - Carried 29 - 18

RESOLUTION

Swansea "Examination of Party methods of Publicity".

Cde. Ambridge, Swansea. We wish to stress the importance of the "Socialist Standard" and are not satisfied with the present method of publicity. We have spent a lot of money on publicity both this year and last year. When someone replies you send a specimen copy of the "S.S." and you may or may not get a reply. According to the Publicity Committee they have received more replies than they have received subscriptions. The present small adverts. are unsatisfactory when you are advertising a journal with which people are not familiar. We should have a fairly large statement according to the cash available and make sure that the advert. suggests more clearly what the Party stands for. Cde. Docherty, Hackney. Advertisements in the 'New Statesman', 'Tribune' and 'Guardian' are a waste of time - we are speaking to people who know the Party well and are opposed to us. We should be more selective and examine other types of journals. Cde. Garnham, Cent. Lit. Sales Cttee. We have had a quotation from a distributing Company which would circulate the "S.S." in the Central London area for £20 a month and also in other provincial towns for about the same amount. In this way we could get the "S.S." in the shops - but the Party did not want this. Cde. Leslie, Edinburgh. A larger advert. would be better than small ones and a distribution service would be a good idea.

Comrade Sawyer, Publicity Committee. We seem to get criticism but few alternative proposals. The Party is not in a position to place large adverts. regularly, and continuity of advertising is very important. Some members object to 'World Socialism' but there is no other journal which uses this slogan. We no longer give away pamphlets except 'Questions of the Day', of which we have large stocks. Enquirers are given one copy of the current "S.S." or back numbers and leaflets. We send a follow-up circular on which there is provision for reply or to ask for further information, or to apply to join the Party: or they can write that they do not wish to hear further. In future only those people who have replied to the follow-up letter will be notified to Branches. The Committee would welcome suggestions.

In reply to a question as to whether the Committee had considered billboard advertising, the answer was 'no'. Cde. May, Central Organiser. We are dealing with an annual budget of about £400. A full page advert. in the "N.S." costs £280. We are looking at adverts. as a substitute for members' activity - the growth of the Party, both from the 'members' point of view and the circulation of the "S.S.", does not rest on advertising but on the activity of members. Perhaps we could at times drop our small adverts. for a period, conserve our funds and have a large advert. when the political climate is propitious. The Publicity Committee cannot do much better than they are doing at the moment. Do not look at advertising as the way out.

RESOLUTION

Haringey "Problems arising from the series of adverts. in the 'New Statesman' signed by L.E. Weidberg".

Cde. Carter, Haringey. "This advertising by certain members of the Party raises certain problems in connection with our publicity, e.g. they affect the Party's control over its own publicity, and individuals are acting out of harmony with the Party. There is an official advertisement by the Publicity Committee in the "N.S." which is relegated to the back-ground while a great deal of money is being spent on advertising which has not been discussed at the Branch or at Conference. What is going to be done regarding replies? Cde. Weidberg's first advert. brought in 280 replies which the Publicity Committee attempted to deal with. Some of these replies required detailed arguments and took considerable time, but the small adverts. by the Party bring forward enquiries which can be followed up by issuing leaflets etc.

There is also the question of finance. For every idea that has come up the dead hand of our empty treasury has affected the way we have voted. But members who have a bit of money can make their own policy. Haringey Branch make an appeal that these members should come into line with the democratic procedure of the Party and if they have suggestions for improving the Party's propaganda, go to their Branches and discuss the matter, part with their cash and let the Party get on with it. We have a series of adverts. going into the "N.S." without the Party being consulted about it and some of the material in them is undesirable. Cde. Hardy, E.C. member. I would say that undoubtedly Comrade Weidberg has a flair for publicity but that should not obscure the fact that he has made certain statements which are somewhat objectionable. Regarding Biafra, the impression was given that we are on the side of the Biafrans: the gist of his attack was on the Nigerian Government. This is not the Party's position and I object to the S.P.G.B. being put into this position. Three-quarters of his first article was very good publicity but he went on to attack the Labour Government as being monumentally inefficient in running capitalism. But they have done very well. The reader gets the impression that someone else could run capitalism better, but this is not our case: it was typical 'New Statesman' propaganda. Regarding unemployment, he said it existed as a piece of malevolence on the part of the Labour Government. Since when have we been saying this? We say that capitalism produces unemployment. On the basis of these things the E.C. was right in saying that if these adverts were going in in the name of the Party there should be machinery available for vetting them. Cde. Buick, Haringey. We are not concerned about the advert. which went in in the name of the Party but we are complaining about the ones which started in December and were signed 'L.E. Weidberg'. Are we going to allow Party members to by-pass the rules of the Party? Conference should get these members to identify themselves and stop doing it. Cde. K. Knight, Mid. Herts. We support Haringey. If the statements mentioned by Comrade Hardy had been made by Party members in letters (which they are entitled to write) the Party would have objected. The E.C. should do something about the matter. Cde. Ballard, Westminster. There are a lot of things that only individuals can do within the Party in terms of activity such as odd letters to the Press etc, but we may expect as the Party grows and we have more machinery and more money that certain of these functions will be taken over from individuals by committees, etc. Regarding this particular activity, large-scale advertisements, this is something which the Party can deal with now and is well organised to do. If an individual has money, if he is a member of the Party concerned with furthering our case, his money should be in the Party. We have a Publicity Committee which is capable of dealing with this sort of thing, but we have not the money. Socialism requires collective activity and we should set an example to the working class we are talking to.

Floor Resolution: Crump, Manchester. Carter, Haringey+

"This Conference recommends the E.C. to dissociate the Party from the series of adverts over which it has no control inserted in the 'New Statesman' in the name of a 'small group' and signed 'L.E. Weidberg'".

LOST 13 - 16

Cde. Crump. The point is that the Party is associated with these adverts, because the name of the "S.S." appears with them and when people reply our literature is sent to them. These articles should not show the name of the Party nor the "S.S.", and they should not receive our literature.

The Gen. Secretary here informed delegates of the resolution passed by the E.C. on 3rd February:- "That Comrade L.E. Weidberg be given permission to insert the reference to the "S.S." in the form outlined in his letter in any future inserts in the 'New Statesman', subject to review" (Carried 7 - 3).

Floor Resolution: May, Westminster. McClatchie, Camden:

"That this Conference recommends that in view of the current adverts. in the 'New Statesman' inserted by a small group of socialists, the E.C. review their resolution dated 3rd February, 1970, and appoint a small committee to arrange a meeting with this group in a final endeavour to bring this matter under Party control".

Cde. Baldwin. Delegates should consider carefully what they are doing in dissociating themselves from what has been done. The Party cannot tell the 'New Statesman' now that we are not associated. The Party should have control, but

I suggest that if you put at the bottom of the articles that it is worth while reading the "S.S." people would get our literature. Cde. K. Knight. This resolution does not go far enough - it should go further and say that if Cde. Weidberg continues to do this he should be disciplined. He is a comrade. Cde. R. Guy. Here we have a member who can place adverts. of his own accord; and the E.C. after discussing the matter with him says it will watch the situation. Comrade Hardy says 75% of the subject-matter might be all right, but what about the other 25%? This is an incredulous position. I hear for the first time this afternoon that there is a 'group' involved. Cde. Young. I have misgivings about handling the situation in this way. I have yet to hear that Cde. Weidberg refused or rejected any attempt by the E.C. to reach agreement on the text of what has been published. Think carefully before you start heresy hunting - a handful of socialists should be able to agree what shall be done in the name of the Party. Cde. May. The state has been reached when the E.C. should review the position. We might make one more move in this direction. I would like to see three members of the E.C. have a meeting, not with Comrade Weidberg but with this group who are obviously members and who are behind these adverts. and put the position to them bluntly and plainly. Conference should tell the E.C. that we are now concerned about the matter and that they should do something about it. Cde. H. Weaver. The E.C. originally and rightly turned down Comrade Weidberg's suggestion that he should elect his own panel. It is undemocratic for a member to nominate his own vetting committee. The E.C.'s approval was entirely restricted to mention of the "S.S.". There is nothing to be done now short of turning Comrade Weidberg out except withdraw permission for him to advertise the "S.S".

Cde. Sawyer. The Publicity Committee hold the view that these adverts. are destructive of their own advertising programme. Small steady adverts. are better than a big splash. If you are going to by-pass the Publicity Committee you might as well do away with it. Cde. Steele. What would have happened to the Publicity Cttee. if they had put in advertisements which contained matter which was opposed to the Party's case? They would have been instructed to alter the adverts. When it is a private member who is not under the control of the Party it seems that we cannot do this very simple thing because of the money behind it. We are all agreed that here is an individual putting in adverts. which are opposed to the Party's case in some details. If this was done through the Party we could do something about it. Conference is the supreme organisation of this Party, not the E.C. It may well be that the E.C.'s views differ from those of Conference and it appears that the majority of E.C. members was quite clearly with Comrade Weidberg's actions - much more, I would judge, than the rank and file of the Party. You should instruct the E.C. to do something, not merely recommend. Cde. Crump. Manchester Branch thought that these articles were to be reviewed before they appeared but it seems that it is only after they appear that we make up our minds whether or not they put the Party's position.

Resolution Lost 10 - 17

Floor Resolution

R. Guy and G. Wood, Lewisham:-

"That this Conference recommends the E.C. to consider whether the continuing advertisements of Comrade E.E. Weidberg in the 'New Statesman' constitute action detrimental to the interests of the Party".

CARRIED 23 - 6

LITERATURE

Resolution: Manchester: "That the price of the "S.S." be raised to 1/-".

Addendum: Westminster: "Add ('5p'): the increase to commence with the June issue".

Cde. Atkinson. We find that we can sell the "S.S." quite easily at 1/-. 1/- or 5p. is better than having to ask for 9d. This increase would help to meet the loss sustained on the "S.S.". Cde. Smith, Westminster. The increase should commence in June to allow the S.S. Production Committee time to make adjustments. Old Age Pensioners would have to find 15/- instead of 11/6d. for their subscriptions. Old Age Pensioners should be sent the "S.S." free of charge.

Addendum Carried 22 - 11

As sub-Res. " 27 - 9

Resolution: Manchester: "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to give priority to the proposal to publish Martov's 'The State and the Socialist Revolution' as a paper back at a viable price".

Cde. Crump. The edition of this work brought out in the 1930s is the only available English translation and it has been out of print for 30 years. We consider it is a masterly analysis and a good reply to Lenin's 'The State and the Revolution'. All that is needed is to obtain permission for the copyright. The Pamphlets Cttee. consider it would be of little interest to the working class and that our own pamphlets would be more acceptable. All our experience goes against this. There is a demand today for any Marxian literature. We do not say that the Party should publish it itself. The Pamphlets Committee should approach commercial companies like Penguin Books who do not mind what they publish if it is likely to sell. We could write the introduction. The time to publish socialist literature is when people are becoming disillusioned and now is the time for us to cash in on this. We suggest that a new edition of 'Principles and Policy' would have less impact on workers than Martov. Cde. Hardy, New Pamphlets Cttee. The Pamphlets Committee has never been opposed to this being published. We were considering the question of the Party publishing it as opposed to Penguins, which is a different proposition. And there is the question of priority over other Party pamphlets. As an alternative we might do it as a joint effort with the W.S.P. of America. Cde. Cook, Birmingham. we might consider publishing it in the form of the "Socialist Standard" - have a special issue - perhaps two or three columns, together with our own explanatory notes to show where we disagree etc. The paper-back edition is not a viable one. So many publishers are doing this now that ours would be just another one. Cde. McClatchie. Why is 'Martov' chosen instead of Kautsky, whose argument against Lenin is just as destructive as Martov's and better in many respects. Cde. Buick. Kautsky's book has already been published as a commercial proposition by a paper-back company. Cde. Holford, Brighton. Most of our members do not know anything about 'Martov' and so are not in a position to vote for or against publication. We should leave this matter in the hands of comrades elected to do this kind of work for the Party.

Resolution Lost 13 - 25

Floor Resolution Cook, Birmingham. R. Critchfield, Ealing.

"That the E.C. be recommended to try to publish 'Martov's 'The State and the Socialist Revolution' as a special issue of the 'Standard' at an economic price and without interfering with normal "S.S" issues".

Cde. Cook. We should do this without interfering with the work of the Pamphlets Committee and we should be realistic in economic terms. A paper-back would need to have 50,000 copies: this is not viable. As an "S.S" issue we would have full control over the numbers to be printed.

Manchester and Lewisham both opposed the resolution which was

Lost 2 - 19

Comrade K. Knight raised the question of the absence of reports from several sub-Committees and the Gen. Secretary explained that he thought all sub-Committees should report even if there was nothing of special interest to say. All sub-Committees and officials were circularised and asked to send their reports in in good time and were repeatedly reminded. We cannot do more than make urgent appeals. The responsibility is on the Committees. He also asked delegates to remind their Branches that it is vitally important regarding any item for discussion or resolution for Conference to make it clear on the Agenda or by a written statement (with which Head Office would be willing to help) exactly what it is they are going to discuss. Cde. Lawrence, Camden. This is not a matter for the Branches but for the E.C. who should be able to say that such and such a Committee is not functioning properly. Perhaps the Gen. Secretary could use his own initiative to give information as to what is going on and have it summarised for Conference. Cde. Ambridge, Swansea. The question of Party members signing the nomination papers of our opponents' candidates should have been mentioned in the E.C. Report - Branches were not made aware of the way in which this matter first arose. The E.C.'s Report should be issued to Branches before the call for Items for Discussion and Amendments to Rule. Cde. K. Knight, for

Standing Orders Committee. agreed that this was desirable.

General Secretary. As a member of the Committee elected to consider Conference procedure I would point out that it was recommended that the General Secretary should collate information for the Report and present it at Conference as the E.C.'s Report, but the Party did not want this method. It is refreshing to find that the delegation is at last thinking of something along these lines. It would be better for me to have a freer hand to report on Committees' work. Some Committees are not capable of writing a suitable report, but they do send in certain information to the E.C. and this could be collated and given as a working report to Conference. But there seems to be some hard and fast views on this in the Party. However, no new information is being put before Conference which the Party should not be aware of. Any appendices to the E.C. Report received after the given date cannot be included but it is always possible to make time for members to give this information at Conference. We are tied to Conference resolutions and our time-table.

The adoption of E.C. Report to Conference was agreed on the motion of Dale and Cook.

EDUCATION

Resolution, Westminster: "This Conference is disturbed at the lack of educational facilities and instructs the E.C. to appoint an Education Officer who would endeavour amongst other things to arrange a summer school in or out of London".

Amendt, Camden: "Delete all after 'Education Officer'".

Amendt, Haringey: "Line 3, delete 'Officer' and insert 'Committee'".

Cde. Smith, Westminster. We are concerned about the need for educational classes, particularly at the present time. It would be better to have an Education Officer rather than a Committee - he could be held responsible. Cde. Lawrence, Camden. We endorse the general sentiment that it is sad that in this field we do not achieve more, mainly due to lack of response from the membership. But we do not think that a Committee would be better. History over recent years shows that a Committee is obviously not the best way to handle this. A Committee should be concerned with a subject where a number of members can debate and come to decisions, but with education this is not necessary. We would like to eliminate the idea of a summer school: these have served no useful purpose in the past, but there are other methods of education. Cde. Carter. I accept responsibility for the present Committee but I do not know why it should be considered that the Committee has done nothing. There is a lot going on in this connection. Branches themselves - Westminster, Mid. Herts, Lewisham, Haringey - have been organising their own educational activities. Haringey Branch see the question on a central basis, bringing the existing syllabus up to date and generally helping to carry out the work which has been going on in the Party. Cde. D'Arcy, Camden. Our resolution leaves the position open - it would be up to the ability of the member concerned. It is good that Branches are carrying out their own education as far as possible but there are certain types of activity in which Branches are handicapped. Members of a Branch may know the Party case but not every Branch can produce a speaker. This needs a central body like Head Office to try and develop at least a speakers' class. A Committee was appointed last year and terms of reference laid down. The suggested syllabus to be got up to date covered 17 subjects, crises, the General Strike and other things, 72 different books to be considered. It was overloaded and unworkable. Leave the matter fluid, get to a level where we can say we have an economics class, a speakers' class and perhaps two or three summer schools. Anything more ambitious is for the future. There is a proposition going to the E.C. very soon, and a speakers' class will become a reality in the next few weeks.

Haringey Amendment Lost 13 - 19

Resolution as amended by Camden Carried 12 - 14

ITEM FOR DISCUSSIONHaringey

"The Training of new members". (Withdrawn by Haringey).

Comrade H. Weaver urged the use of tapes in the training of new members. The Party has now first class equipment to improve the quality of our tapes. We have a track tape recorder (5" and 7") and 5/- is a small price to pay considering the cost of producing them.

Cde. Lawrence. We should congratulate the Tapes Committee on its efforts in this connection. This is the best thing in the educational field that has happened to the Party for many years.

PARLIAMENTARY

Resolution: Westminster: "This Conference welcomes the adoption of Cde. E. Grant as Parliamentary candidate for Hornsey and urges other Branches, wherever possible, to adopt a prospective Parliamentary candidate for the forthcoming General Election".

Amendt. Ealing:

"That the resolution be amended to read: 'This Conference urges all Branches, wherever possible, to adopt a prospective Parliamentary candidate for the forthcoming General Election'".

Cde. Baldwin, Parliamentary Cttee. "Lambeth, Westminster, Camden and Haringey are closely linked together. Over recent years we have managed to put up two candidates, one in London and one in Glasgow or out of London. I would like to see the Party put forward a minimum of three Parliamentary candidates in the London area. 'Let us get away from 'two is the best we can do concept'. The money has always been forthcoming and we have never had to use general Party funds for the purpose. Cde. Vanni, Glasgow. We are opposed to contesting the next General Election. It is a waste of time, money and energy. The fact that people are fed up etc. only gives us a negative result, and only a fraction of the electorate can be contacted with our small resources. The results are disheartening for Party members and we only get small snippets of news about the Party. Let us wait till we can make a real show.

Amendment Carried 19 - 18

As sub-Res. " 25 - 11

Central Branch Votes. One of the delegates present asked if the voting of Central Branch members could be explained.

Comrade Lawrence, Central Branch Secretary, pointed out that each Central Branch member has a voting paper. Usually only 20% bother to take part. This year there were 33%. For every ten members who vote, one is recorded, so that every one vote means ten Central Branch members.

RESOLUTIONManchester

"The Revolutionary use of Parliament".

Cde. Crump. We are inadequate in the way we put over our arguments in this matter. There are basically two distinct lines of argument, the 'constitutional' one and the 'consciousness' one. The Party should put more emphasis not on the supposition that the Army, Police Force etc. would have to obey a workers' Parliament for legalistic or constitutional reasons but on the supposition that by the time of the socialist revolution a majority of the armed forces will be socialist like the rest of the working class. Cde. Hardy. I think Manchester have a valid point. We should be saying the kind of thing we were saying in the "S.S" in the inter-war period. What has been said in the "S.S" has been largely determined by the criticism we have received. On the whole I think that both arguments should be used. Cde. Steele.

I agree with Cde. Crump with a few differences. The way you put the Party's case is determined by what you are refuting. We have tended to fall into the habit of sometimes using phrases which stress the 'constitutional' argument instead of emphasising the 'conscious majority' action. We should make it clear that we are not victims of legalistic delusions. We should not say that violence will hardly ever arise nor give the impression that we are pacifists. I take the view that violence

is certain to arise. We do not stress sufficiently these aspects of our Parliamentary case which distinguishes us from the reformists. We high-light names and personalities of our Parliamentary candidates. We should draw as little attention as possible to our candidates as personalities and our prospective candidates should never write their own manifestos. I disagree with Manchester that we should avoid the argument on 'constitution' - this is valuable and brings to the fore that Parliamentary power does rest with the capitalist class in Parliament: but I disagree with the idea that the majority of the Armed Forces will be socialist. We have always argued that we must take over the State machine: there is a contradiction here. We should not let the Party's case depend on the suggestion that members of the Armed Forces will be socialist. Cde. Young. Cde. Crump has made some criticism and qualification of our propaganda in reference to this question but I have not heard any new idea. I cannot see any grounds for anyone saying there is a contradiction in our case. Cde. D'Arcy. If you are asked about this question on the Party platform we say we must have control of Parliament. Suppose the question is that the capitalist class may shut down Parliament, then if you have the Armed Forces on your side I think that violence will not be very much. Comrade Steele should give some evidence of a situation in which violence might arise in order that we can deal with it. Cde. McClatchie. During the 1920s and 1930s we got questions suggesting that Parliament was no use and we had to emphasise the fact that we must get control of Parliament. We should deal with things as they are, not with what may happen in the future. Comrade Steele says he considers there will be violence in the future. My own opinion is that there will be no violence. The Party cannot commit itself to either view. The Party will grow slowly at first but when people do come to our side they will come like an avalanche. Cde. Baldwin. Is Clause 6. of the D. of P. correct? Does the political machinery exist to conserve the monopoly of the capitalist class over the means of production? Neither Comrade Crump nor Comrade Steele have added anything to what the Party has said over the years. Party literature has always stressed the need for understanding. If it is suggested that Parliament may cease to exist and regional forms of government set up, what then? These would become the centres of power functioning in the terms of Clause 6, and take control. They would be taking over the functions of Parliament and the working class would still have to aim at capturing political power. Cde. Dale. for Scrutiny of Forms A. Committee. This controversy has arisen from our report, which we thought was harmless, in which we stated that violence in the establishment of socialism was the most recurring disagreement. The real crux of the matter is not whether our opponents who advocate violence think we place too much emphasis on the 'constitutional' aspect but that these people believe that socialism can be established by the use of power. This is something that the Party has always refuted. I think that violence will be involved but that socialism cannot be established by violence. Cde. Edmunds. There are three requisites for the establishment of socialism: (1) the system we know as capitalism will have outlived its usefulness (2) there will be a majority of the working class who will understand socialism and will vote for it (3) all those who want socialism will certainly not want a system which has outlived its usefulness. I cannot see any situation which would give rise to violence. Manchester Branch are 19th century revolutionary socialists - they should get into the 20th century.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Manchester: "Signing of non-socialist nomination papers by Party members".

Westminster: "Ought Party members to sign nomination papers of political opponents in elections"?

Cde. Phillips, Gen. Secretary, referred delegates to E.C. Report dated 27th January, which stated how this matter first arose. Cde. Bradley, Manchester. We say it is in the interests of the working class to extend democracy. People should have every opportunity to throw their ideas around. Cde. Leslie, Edinburgh. We are in business to get socialism - we are not in business to give support to our opponents, which is what signing their nomination papers means. We are not trying to restrict their freedom of speech but we will not help them. Cde. Cook, Birmingham. I would like to ask Manchester how they would feel if they had helped to return a candidate who was unopposed. Cde. Wood, Lewisham. In a Constituency there are roughly 50,000 people, voters, and an organisation comes along which wants to put up a candidate.

They cannot find ten people to sign so the S.P.G.B. must help! They have the same opportunity to state their case as any other opponent: we do not deny them this so how can members say it is a question of democracy? Cde. Vanni agreed with Comrade Wood. Cde. Law (speaking for himself). I think this matter stems from the argument that anybody can sign ours: this is where loose thinking ends up. We are not denying them the right to speak. Cde. K. Knight. This has arisen out of the controversy over Rule 28. I suggest a yardstick which the E.C. could use when non-members are being asked to sign our nomination papers - would they sign anyone else's nomination paper? Candidates should be asked this. Cde. Buick. The nomination paper does not amount to supporting their programme. But members of the Party should not sign the nomination papers of anybody else, and I see no contradiction in this. Members of the Party who do this should justify themselves to the Party - but they cannot do this.

Cde. Lawrence drew attention to the contradiction between allowing non-members to sign our nomination papers and not allowing Party members to sign the nomination papers of our opponents. Cde. Steele. I agree that they are separate issues. I take the view that we should be able to sign our opponents' nomination papers but I accept the wish of the majority and I do not intend to do it. It is true that in some articles in the "S.S." you will find statements such as we support democracy but only as a means to establish socialism. We have said many times that democracy is of itself of value to the working class. Members of the W.S.P. of U.S.A. have signed the nomination papers of members of the DeLeonist Organisation, the Socialist Labour Party. Cde. Ambridge, Swansea. If you take the trouble to study you will find that in the beginning voting was tied up with property. Having got your candidate you in theory are allowed to vote for an individual - in fact you do not: you vote for a political programme. Cde. Baldwin. You should not separate the pursuit of democracy from the work of socialism. Let us recognise that large or small political Parties are our class enemies and re-affirm no compromise. They have never helped us. Cde. Walters, Westminster. I am surprised to hear members using an argument which can only be described as moralistic - any means to an end. We do not try to prevent our opponents from speaking: neither do we support them. It is out of keeping with the interests of the Party that non-members should sign our nomination papers with permission from the E.C. and we should not therefore sign our opponents'.

Cde. D'Arcy. This business has started because of the view that nomination papers do not matter, nor who sign them. We cannot convince them so we will take their patronage! I do not want that kind of support. Manchester seem to want to show how liberal we are. But we are propagandists. We extend the courtesy to our opponents of allowing them our platform, but there is nothing democratic about this - it is to have a chance to demolish them. When our opponents already have every natural right should we grant them another one?

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Westminsre

"Who are the Capitalist Class in Russia?"

Glasgow. Comrade Buick has indicated that the ruling class in Russia get their surplus value not in the form of rent, interest and profit but in the form of inflated salaries and premiums. Glasgow do not agree. There are members of the administrative clique in Britain, America and France who draw precisely the same form of inflated salaries. All it means is that some members of the working class receive higher salaries than others. We think that since it has been established that Russia does have commodity production the vast majority of workers work for wages which represent a small fraction of the values produced. Because of this and because of the dearth of information to the contrary we take the view for the time being at any rate that we must accept that we do not know enough about Russia to conclude that this capitalist class in Russia draws its surplus value in precisely the same way as elsewhere. Cde. Leslie, Edinburgh. What is the definition of a capitalist class? In Russia you have the situation where managers and members of government bodies can gain control of the means of production and distribution. It is not a parallel situation with this country. In Russia a certain stage can be reached in management where they can dictate their own salaries. There is a difference between the Soviet system and our system. Cde. Hardy. Last year Conference passed a resolution

saying that the ruling class in Russia is a capitalist class in that they perform the same function as in the rest of the capitalist world." When this was discussed on the E.C. it became clear that this resolution was being interpreted differently by Party members. The essence of the difference is this. What Manchester is saying is that the ruling class are a capitalist class because they are performing a certain function, extracting surplus value from the working class but specifically that they are not consuming surplus value. In Russia the ruling class is performing a function not appropriating surplus value but providing the conditions under which capital in Russia is accumulating.

The S.S. Production Committee, however, in reply to Glasgow Branch, had written that a capitalist is someone who is in a position to appropriate, in one way or another, "some of the unpaid labour of the working class". You will see that this was not what Manchester Branch meant when moving their resolution. They stressed that the Russian ruling class were performing the function of accumulating capital even if they were leading abstemious lives. I would say that historically once people get into positions of power they seek to accumulate property and become wealthy.

Also in Russia 25% of industry is in private hands and it is possible that the same tendency will go on there.

Cde. D'Arcy. To identify a capitalist class is not as simple as it appears to be. What function does a capitalist class perform? The Capitalist class are an economic group in society with united interests reflecting themselves in the ownership of the means of production. From the point of view of the resolution passed last year, the point I take exception to is that no-one disputes that capitalism exists in Russia and that there is a privileged section of people in Russia, but do the privileges themselves amount to an economic position which would qualify them as members of the capitalist class? Is the ruling class a governing body? There is capitalism, and we are agreed that there are capitalists, but when we come to the proposition stated in the resolution that the ruling class "stands in the same relationship to the means of production...." I take exception to it. In my view the capitalist class in Russia is an embryonic class. If it was on the same basis as capitalism here they would have developed the same relations of production as here and the same ideas - there would be rent, interest and profit. These things are not there. The amount of appropriation in Russia is very marginal, rent is Municipal: there is no private rent, no State Bonds - these have been abolished. Interest is gained through the national equivalent of the National Savings movement here, 4%. Nowhere near what could be regarded as an average rate of profit. This is the key. You must produce evidence to show that there is an average rate of profit, that the social capital is vested in the hands of a minority. If the social capital is owned by the State then the monopoly of the surplus value will be appropriated by the State. The capitalist mode of production is not simply a mode of production - it is a process of accumulation. You should be able to create more capital. It also means the inalienable right of these people to have the legal right to employ the energies of the mass of the population. No group in Russia has this legal right. You have a capitalist class that cannot produce commodities and enter into a free market. If these things are absent then you have not reached the stage where the democracy of commodity has come into its own. Things in Russia are moving fast and there is general decentralisation, but to try to prove a managerial revolution case goes by the board. The Marxian basic theory is that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of socially necessary labour required for its production. In Russia the whole business is turned upside down. There is no export trade, there is uneconomic production - producing without consideration of the conditions of the market. They are trying to bring Russia into line with modern conditions - they are building up capital. There is no evidence that there is a capitalist class. This is for a few years time.

Items referred to Autumn Delegate Meeting:

Swansea: "Shall the Party publish official statements to the general public on actions proposed by any union or association of workers when occasion arises"

Manchester: "Down with Utopiansism".

Manchester: "E.C.'s policy statement on reforms".

(not dealt with owing to lack of time).